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## A LITTLE CAUTION CAN KEEP SUN WORSHIPPERS SAFE THIS SUMMER

**By Spc. Todd Goodman**

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**LANDSTUHL, Germany** – When summer comes, all eyes look to the sky for the sun that provides light, warmth and a golden tan that goes well with tank tops and swimsuits. Unfortunately, the sun can also bring premature wrinkling and skin damage.

“There is no such thing as a safe tan,” said Maj. Michael Bryan, chief of Dermatology at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. “Tan skin means the skin has been damaged. Most people agree that tan skin looks better than pale skin, so what I tell them is to get color from a bottle, not the sun.”

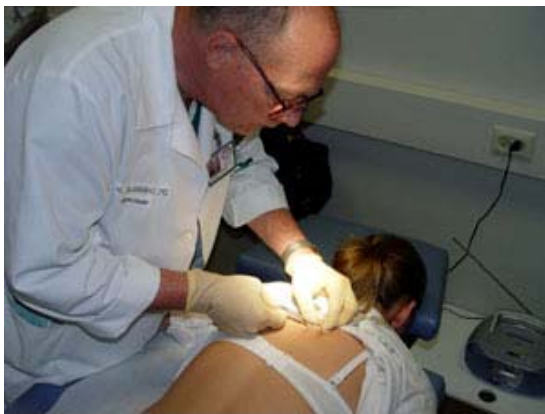


PHOTO COURTESY LANDSTUHL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER  
Lt. Col. Havard Albright, a dermatologist at the Landstuhl (Germany) Regional Medical Center, performs a procedure on a patient with skin cancer. Being cautious in the summer sun can greatly reduce the risk of skin damage, LRMCC experts say.

Bryan said that a tan acts as a shield, laying down more color to protect the skin from the sun's rays. Over time and without protection, however, that shield will give way to the sun's damaging rays. One serious sunburn can increase the risks of skin cancer by as much as 50 percent.

But the experts say all is not lost; there are some things people can do to prevent or minimize sun damage. Think wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts and sunscreen.

"I am a big proponent of hats, considering that 90 percent of our skin cancers form on the head and neck," said Bryan.

Other areas of the body are also particularly susceptible. The shoulders and back have a high chance of become sunburned because they are so frequently exposed to the sun. Wearing a shirt, wide hat and sunscreen can greatly reduce that risk.

"Sunscreen is a great thing," said Bryan. "Unfortunately, we don't use enough or put it on as often as we should."

"There is no sunscreen in the world that is water- or sweat-proof," added Lt. Col. Havard Albright, a LRMC dermatologist. "It all washes off. You should apply it every two hours, and if you have been swimming, apply it every hour."

Albright also recommends that people perform regular self-examinations for the ravages of sun damage.

"Examine your body once a month," he said. "You should be looking for new moles or moles that have changed either shape or color."

Although most skin cancer doesn't develop on moles, it can happen, the experts say. In examining a mole, they explain, all it takes is the "ABCDs" – asymmetry, borders, color and diameter.

The mole should be asymmetrical, meaning if it was cut in half, both sides would look alike. The borders of a mole should be smooth, not choppy. A mole that changes in color, becoming either lighter or darker, should be checked. So should a mole that is bigger than a pencil's eraser.

To examine normal skin, look for a sore that won't heal or a spot of skin that bleeds on its own. These are two warning signs that should be checked immediately.

Bryan said many people don't take sun damage and skin cancer seriously, but it can require radical surgery to stop it before it's too late.

For more information or to schedule an exam, contact LRMC's Dermatology Clinic at 486-8171 or 06371-86-8171.

